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# THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE INDIANS OF NORTH AMERICA.

BY A. A. GOLDENWEISER.

## I. HISTORICAL NOTE.

THE credit for giving a firm foundation to the problems of social organization, and for impressing their importance upon the minds of American anthropologists, belongs indubitably to Lewis H. Morgan. He derived his early inspiration for Indian study from his life among the Seneca-Iroquois, by whom, in fact, he was adopted and regarded as one of their own. His knowledge of Iroquois life and lore was as wide as it was deep, and it bore fruit in the famous "League of the Iroquois" (1851),—a work in which accurate observation and sweeping generalization, scientific sanity, and ethnological naïveté, went hand in hand. Since the appearance of that work, Morgan has been justly recognized as the co-discoverer with McLennan and Bachofen, of the maternal system of kinship organization. While studying the Iroquois clan system, Morgan's attention was attracted by their method of counting relationships. With that keen sense for the significant so characteristic of big minds, Morgan was quick to grasp the wide bearing of his discovery. Not satisfied with his Iroquois achievements, he extended his personal investigations over many Indian tribes of North America; and through a system of *questionnaires*, which he sent out to scholars and field-workers in foreign lands, he amassed in an amazingly short time a huge store of data on the social organization and relationship systems of many primitive tribes in Africa and Australia, India and the South Seas. The results of his activities were given to the world in his "Ancient Society" (1877), still an anthropological classic; "Houses and House-Life among American Indians" (1881); and "The Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family,"<sup>1</sup> one of the most famous, if least read, works in the entire field of ethnology. It comprises the concrete data of some eighty relationship systems, together with Morgan's interpretation of such systems as reflections of forms of marriage. Morgan was a whole-hearted evolutionist. In his "Ancient Society" he outlined the economic development of mankind "from savagery through barbarism to civilization," rediscovered the primitive clan and phratry in the social institutions of

<sup>1</sup> Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge, vol. xvii, 1871.

the Greeks and the Romans, and traced the history of social organization, everywhere substantially the same, from its early beginnings in a maternal kinship system, through a paternal kinship system, and up to its final disruption at the dawn of modern society, when the ties of blood were forced to give way before the less intimate but more economically significant ties of the ground, of territorial cohabitation.

In the course of time, serious errors of fact and judgment were discovered in Morgan's work. Intensive exploration in many regions of the American area brought to light facts of social organization unknown to Morgan or underestimated by him. Critical thinking along theoretical lines, on the general background of anti-evolutionary tendencies, went far to discredit the sweeping generalizations of Morgan's time. Thus we find that John R. Swanton, in his articles on "The Social Organization of American Tribes"<sup>1</sup> and "A Reconstruction of the Theory of Social Organization,"<sup>2</sup> represents views on social organization that are less sweeping in their bearings, more critical in their use of ethnological material, and in far better accord with ascertained fact. At the hand of American evidence, Swanton showed that clan and gentile systems did not exhaust the fundamental forms of social organization; that a less definite system, based on the individual family and the local group, was at least as prevalent in North America as the clan and the gens; that the tribes organized on the clan basis represented, on the whole, a higher culture than the clanless ones; that evidence did not support the assumption of a pre-existing maternal system in tribes now organized on the paternal basis; and that convincing evidence could be produced for the diffusion of social systems.

Most recent explorations, as well as further theoretical analysis, have fully vindicated Swanton's conclusions. In an article on "Social Organization"<sup>3</sup> published less than a year ago, Robert H. Lowie reviewed, under the guise of a critique of Morgan, some of the most recent work on social organization. He found himself in complete agreement with Swanton's conclusions, and was able, in addition, to point out, at the hand of relevant data, that the problem of inheritance of property and office was in part distinct from that of group descent; that the psychological nature of kinship groups was variable; that the relations between phratries and clans or gentes were far more complex than formerly supposed; and that the regulation of marriage was not a feature invariably, or solely, or fundamentally, connected with kinship groups.

<sup>1</sup> *American Anthropologist*, 1905.

<sup>2</sup> Boas Anniversary Volume, *Anthropological Papers*, 1906.

<sup>3</sup> *The American Journal of Sociology*, 1914.

In the short space allotted to this article an extensive survey of American data on social organization cannot be attempted, nor do I propose to discuss all the interesting theoretical aspects of that subject. The problem of totemism, as well as that of the classificatory systems of relationship, of which we have heard so much lately, will be left aside altogether. Exogamy and the relation of phratries and moieties to clans and gentes, both problems ripe for systematic discussion, will be treated very briefly. No mention will be made of the distribution of such so-called social customs as the mother-in-law taboo or joking relationships, or of the theoretical questions connected with these customs. The theoretical problems selected for discussion, as well as the illustrative material used in the following pages, have been determined by more or less arbitrary considerations.

## II. THE SOURCES.

Not all parts of the Eskimo area have so far been thoroughly described; but the works of Boas,<sup>1</sup> Nelson,<sup>2</sup> Murdoch,<sup>3</sup> and Turner<sup>4</sup> give us a satisfactory picture of the social system and habits of the Eskimo, — a picture not likely to be seriously modified by further exploration. The data dealing with the tribes of the Northwest coast and southern Alaska are, on the whole, fairly complete. Here we have to rely on the older sources, such as Dawson, Niblack, and Swan; the later work by Boas for the British Association for the Advancement of Science; the still more recent work of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, to which Boas, Swanton, and Smith have contributed; and a preliminary sketch by Sapir,<sup>5</sup> which is to be followed by a full

<sup>1</sup> F. Boas, *The Central Eskimo* (6th Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1884-85); and *The Eskimo of Baffin Land and Hudson Bay* (Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History, vol. xv, Parts 1 and 2, 1901).

<sup>2</sup> E. W. Nelson, *The Eskimo about Bering Strait* (18th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, 1896-97, Part I).

<sup>3</sup> J. Murdoch, *Ethnological Results of the Point Barrow Expedition* (9th Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1887-88).

<sup>4</sup> L. M. Turner, *Ethnology of the Ungava District* (11th Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1889-90).

<sup>5</sup> Boas, *Reports of the British Association for the Advancement of Science*, 1888-98; "The Salish Tribes of the Interior of British Columbia," and "The Tribes of the North Pacific Coast" (Annual Archaeological Report, 1905. Appendix, Report of the Minister of Education, Toronto, 1906, pp. 219-225 and 235-249); *Die soziale Gliederung der Kwakiutl* (Proceedings of the International Congress of Americanists, 1904, pp. 141-148); *The Social Organization and the Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl Indians* (Report of the U. S. National Museum for 1895, pp. 311-738); Swanton, *Contributions to the Ethnology of the Haida* (Publications of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, vol. v); and *Social Condition, Beliefs and Linguistic Relationships of the Tlingit Indians* (26th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, 1904-05); H. I. Smith, *Archæology of Lytton, British Columbia* (Publications of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, vol. i); E. Sapir, "Some Aspects of Nootka Language and Culture" (*American Anthropologist*, vol. xiii, 1911, pp. 15-28).

report of his explorations. The forthcoming work by Boas,<sup>1</sup> on the Tsimshian, will, it is to be hoped, throw additional light on the complexities of their social system. Much further information is needed on the social organization of the Tlingit and Bellacoola.

The Athapascan tribes, and for that matter the Eskimo of the Mackenzie area, are very little known. On the tribes of the Plateau area we have the works of James Teit, Charles Hill-Tout, A. B. Lewis,<sup>2</sup> H. J. Spinden,<sup>3</sup> Robert H. Lowie,<sup>4</sup> A. G. Morice,<sup>5</sup> and J. Mooney.<sup>6</sup>

All the tribes of this area are characterized by the so-called "loose," clanless social organization, based essentially on the family and the local group; but the term "loose" in this connection is designative rather of our understanding of the social structure of these tribes than of the structure itself, and a more careful analysis of at least a few of the tribes is much to be desired.

The California data are not much better off. We have, it is true, the works of Roland B. Dixon,<sup>7</sup> A. S. Barrett,<sup>8</sup> and Alfred L. Kroeber;<sup>9</sup> but the larger part of the abundant data of the last-named author remains as yet unpublished.

The Southwest, long-continued exploration notwithstanding, is

<sup>1</sup> Tsimshian Mythology (31st Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, 1915).

<sup>2</sup> Teit, The Thompson Indians of British Columbia, The Lillooet Indians, and The Shuswap (Publications of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, vols. i and iii); Hill-Tout, Notes on the Sk'q'omic of British Columbia (Report of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, 1900, pp. 472-549); Salish and Déné, London, 1907; "Report on the Ethnology of the Siciatl of British Columbia" (Journal of the Anthropological Institute, vol. xxxiv, 1904, pp. 20-92); "Report on the Ethnology of the Slatlunh of British Columbia" (*Ibid.*, 1905, pp. 126-219); and "The Salish Tribes of the Coast and Lower Fraser Delta" (Annual Archæological Report, 1905. Appendix, Report of the Minister of Education, Toronto, 1906, pp. 225-235); Lewis, Tribes of the Columbia Valley and the Coast of Washington and Oregon (Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association, vol. i, 1906).

<sup>3</sup> The Nez Percé Indians (Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association, vol. ii, 1908).

<sup>4</sup> The Northern Shoshone (Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, vol. ii, 1908).

<sup>5</sup> "The Great Déné Race" (Anthropos, vol. i, 1906, pp. 229-278, 483-509, 695-730; and vol. ii, 1907, pp. 1-31, 181-196); Notes on the Western Dénés (Transactions of the Canadian Institute, vol. iv, 1895); The Western Dénés, third series, vol. vii, 1890; and "The Canadian Dénés" (Annual Archæological Report, 1905. Appendix, Report of the Minister of Education, Toronto, 1906, pp. 181-219).

<sup>6</sup> The Ghost Dance Religion (14th Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, Part ii, 1892-93).

<sup>7</sup> The Northern Maidu (Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History, vol. xvii, 1902 and 1905).

<sup>8</sup> Ethnography of the Pomo, 1908.

<sup>9</sup> Types of Indian Culture in California (University of California Publications, Archæology and Ethnology, vol. ii, 1904).

more remarkable for its puzzles than for its positive data. The more important contributions belong to F. H. Cushing, A. F. Bandelier, J. G. Bourke, Washington Matthews, J. Walter Fewkes, F. W. Hodge, George A. Dorsey, Mrs. M. Stevenson, J. P. Harrington, and Miss Freire-Marreco.<sup>1</sup> The problems presented by the social organization of the Southwest are of supreme interest, but our knowledge of the data is exceedingly imperfect; and nowhere, perhaps, in the North American area, is there more need of systematic study and intensive analysis than here.

On the Plains, on the other hand, the situation is much better. Old sources and the data amassed by Lowie, Clark Wissler, Kroeber, and Mooney,<sup>2</sup> throw much light on the social systems of the Blackfoot, Grosventre, Crow, Assiniboin, Arapaho, and Cheyenne, as well as on that of the Dakota.<sup>3</sup> The Omaha also are well known, owing to the early work of J. O. Dorsey and the recent study by Miss Alice

<sup>1</sup> Zuñi Fetiches (2d Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1880-81); Outlines of Zuñi Creation Myths (13th Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1891-92); Bandelier, Historical Introduction to Studies among the Sedentary Indians of Mexico (Papers of the Archæological Institute of America, American series, vol. i, 1881); Final Report of Investigations among the Indians of the Southwestern United States (*Ibid.*, vol. iii, 1890; and vol. iv, 1892); Contributions to the History of the Southwestern Portion of the United States (*Ibid.*, vol. v, 1890); "Documentary History of the Zuñi Tribe" (A Journal of American Ethnology and Archæology, vol. iii, 1892); Dorsey, Indians of the Southwest, 1903; Miss Freire-Marreco, "Tewa Kinship Terms," etc. (American Anthropologist, N. S., vol. xvi, 1914); Goddard, Indians of the Southwest (American Museum of Natural History, Handbook Series No. 2); Harrington, "Tewa Kinship Terms" (American Anthropologist, N. S., vol. xiv, 1912); Hodge, "The Early Navajo and Apache" (*Ibid.*, vol. viii, 1895, pp. 223-241); Matthews, "The Gentile System of the Navajo Indians" (The Journal of American Folk-Lore, vol. iii, 1890, pp. 89-110; compare also Bourke, "Notes upon the Gentile Organization of the Apaches of Arizona," *Ibid.*, pp. 111-126); The Night Chant, a Navaho Ceremony (Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History, vol. vi, 1902); and The Mountain Chant: a Navajo Ceremony (5th Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1883-84); Stevenson, The Sia (11th Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1889-90); and The Zuñi Indians (23d Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, 1901-02).

<sup>2</sup> Catlin, Illustrations of the Manners, Customs, and Conditions of the North American Indians (London, 1848); Lewis and Clark, Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition (Thwaites edition, New York, 1904); Maximilian, Prince of Wied, Travels in the Interior of North America (London, 1843); A. L. Kroeber, The Arapaho (Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History, vol. xviii, 1902-07), and Ethnology of the Gros Ventre (Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, vol. i, 1908); R. H. Lowie, The Assiniboin (*Ibid.*, vol. vi, 1909); and Social Life of the Crow Indians (*Ibid.*, vol. ix, 1912); compare my "Remarks on the Social Organization of the Crow Indians" (American Anthropologist, N. S., vol. xv, 1913, pp. 281-294); J. Mooney, The Cheyenne Indians (Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association, vol. i, 1905-07); C. Wissler, Social Life of the Blackfoot Indians (Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, vol. vii, 1911).

<sup>3</sup> S. R. Riggs, Dakota Grammar, Texts and Ethnography (Contributions to North American Ethnology, vol. ix, 1893).

C. Fletcher and Frank La Flèche.<sup>1</sup> Further information is needed on the other tribes of the Omaha type, — such as the Oto, Ponca, Osage, Iowa, Kansas, and Missouri, — as well as on the Mandan and Hidatsa, the Kiowa and Comanche, and the Pawnee. Further data on the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Pawnee are soon to be expected.

On the tribes of the Southeast little is known. Fragmentary data by Alanson Skinner<sup>2</sup> on the Seminole, and the somewhat more detailed but on the whole meagre account by Frank G. Speck,<sup>3</sup> of the Yuchi, are the main recent works. Much new material, however, is to be expected in the near future as a result of Swanton's recent work among the Creek and Natchez.<sup>4</sup>

The Woodland data are more satisfactory. Here we have W. J. Hoffman's<sup>5</sup> and A. Skinner's works on the Menominee; P. Radin's Winnebago; fragmentary notes by W. Jones on the Sauk and Fox, Kickapoo, and Ojibwa, recently supplemented by T. Michelson; some data on the Cree by Stewart, J. P. MacLean, and Skinner;<sup>6</sup> and a fairly extensive and accurate literature on the Iroquois, to which William M. Beauchamp, David Boyle, Horatio Hale, Lewis H. Morgan, A. C. Parker, J. N. B. Hewitt,<sup>7</sup> and others have contributed.

<sup>1</sup> J. O. Dorsey, *Omaha Sociology* (3d Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1881-82); and *A Study of Siouan Cults* (11th Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1889-90); Alice C. Fletcher, *The Omaha Tribe* (27th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, 1905-06). For a convenient summary of Plains ethnology, see Wissler, *North American Indians of the Plains* (American Museum of Natural History, Handbook Series No. 1).

<sup>2</sup> "Notes on the Florida Seminole" (*American Anthropologist*, N. S., vol. xv, 1913, pp. 63-77); see also C. MacCauley, *The Seminole Indians of Florida* (8th Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1883-84).

<sup>3</sup> *Ethnology of the Yuchi* (Anthropological Publications of the University of Pennsylvania, vol. i, 1909).

<sup>4</sup> *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley and Adjacent Coast of the Gulf of Mexico* (Bulletin 43 of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1911); and "A Foreword on the Social Organization of the Creek Indians" (*American Anthropologist*, N. S., vol. xiv, 1912, pp. 593-599). See also A. S. Gatschet, *A Migration Legend of the Creek Indians*, 1884.

<sup>5</sup> *The Menomini Indians* (14th Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1892-93). Compare A. Skinner, *Social Life and Ceremonial Bundles of the Menomini Indians* (Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, vol. xiii, 1913); and "A Comparative Sketch of the Menomini" (*American Anthropologist*, N. S., vol. xiii, 1911, pp. 551-566).

<sup>6</sup> P. Radin's Winnebago monograph is to be published in the near future by the Bureau of American Ethnology; meanwhile see his preliminary account of "The Clan Organization of the Winnebago" (*American Anthropologist*, N. S., vol. xii, 1910, pp. 209-220); Jones, "Notes on the Fox Indians" (*Journal of American Folk-Lore*, vol. xxiv, 1911, pp. 209-238); "Kickapoo Ethnological Notes" (*American Anthropologist*, N. S., vol. xv, 1913, pp. 332-336); and "Central Algonkin" (*Annual Archaeological Report*, 1905, etc., pp. 136-146); MacLean, *Canadian Savage Folk*, 1890; Skinner, *Notes on the Eastern Cree and Northern Saulteaux* (Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, vol. ix, 1911).

<sup>7</sup> Beauchamp, *History of the New York Iroquois* (New York State Museum, Bulletin 78); and *Civil, Religious and Mourning Councils and Ceremonies of Adoption* (*Ibid.*,

Among works soon to be expected in print, Radin's Winnebago and Ojibwa, Barbeau's Wyandot, and Speck's Penobscot, deserve special notice.

### III. GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION.

In view of recent work on social organization, which tends to disclose an ever-increasing number of social units to be found among different tribes and in different culture areas, the question may well be asked, whether a classification of, say, the tribes of North America into a clan area, a gentile area, and an area not organized on the kinship basis, is still justifiable. If these types of social units do not exhaust or even represent the greater variety of social units which occur in social systems, such a classification would in itself involve an arbitrary restriction of the problems considered. Without discussing the question at this time in greater detail, we might say, however, that, notwithstanding the existence of other social units, the clan, the gens, and the local group remain the fundamental and probably the most ancient forms of social grouping, and, as such, may well serve as a basis for classification. As pointed out by Swanton, the three forms are well represented in North America. The family-village area embraces the Eskimo, the tribes of the Plateau area, the coast tribes from the Nootka to California, and part of the Plains tribes (including the Blackfoot, Assiniboin, Grosventre, Arapaho, Cheyenne, Kiowa, and Comanche). The clan area comprises the Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian, Bellacoola, Heisla, Heiltsuk, and Kwakiutl of the Northwest coast; most of the tribes of the Southwest; the Crow; probably all the Southeastern tribes; the Iroquois, Wyandot, Menominee, and a few other tribes. To the gentile type belong the Omaha, Ponca, Oto, Kansas, Iowa, Missouri, Dakota, the Winnebago, and some tribes of the Southwest.

It will readily be seen that this distribution fully justifies Swanton's generalization that in North America the tribes with clan and gentile systems are associated with higher cultures than those without kinship groups. No satisfactory evidence has been found in American data supporting the contention that tribes organized on a gentile basis must have passed through a stage characterized by a maternal kinship system. On these two points the American data are highly suggestive; for it seems obvious, and it was pointed out a long time ago by Starcke and Cunow, that a clan or gentile system, in the

Bulletin 113). (Beauchamp's writings on Iroquois topics are numerous, but his language is vague and his work uncritical.) Boyle, "The Iroquois" (Annual Archaeological Report, 1905, etc., pp. 146-158). Hale, *The Iroquois Book of Rites*, 1883. Morgan, *The League of the Iroquois*, 1901. Parker's and Hewitt's data on the social organization of the Iroquois are not yet available; see, however, Hewitt's articles on Iroquois subjects as well as those on the clan and the family in *The Handbook of American Indians* (Bulletin 30, Bureau of American Ethnology).



modern sense (that is, a system based on hereditary kinship groups), could not have constituted the earliest form of social grouping. The kinship group, in its capacity of a social unit with definite functions, as well as in its continuity from generation to generation by means of fixed unilateral descent, displays traits which require long periods for their development. A grouping of such a type presupposes a much simpler, really primitive grouping, based on a natural biological unit (the family), or on a natural territorial unit (the local group), or on both. The two may coincide, the family also constituting the local group, or the latter may comprise several families. The absence of evidence as to the succession of maternal and paternal kinship systems is no less suggestive: for, again, it would be strange indeed if it were found that tribes could change their system of reckoning descent — a most momentous social revolution — without a concomitant transformation of the social structure. In the absence of evidence for such a process in America, or, for that matter, in other parts of the world, we are justified in regarding the clan-gens succession (one of the corner-stones of the evolutionary scheme of social development) as a gratuitous assumption, — an assumption which raises to the dignity of a law a process that may never have occurred, or, if it has occurred, must certainly be regarded as highly exceptional. In the light of present knowledge and theory, we may perhaps be permitted to advance the hypothesis that the roads that lead from primitive to modern social organization are three in number. The first takes its beginning in a primitive grouping on a family-village basis, with a vague predilection, perhaps, for paternal descent and inheritance; it passes through a stage of kinship grouping with maternal descent, and ends in a family-village grouping with a definite predilection for paternal descent and inheritance. The second is like the first, except that paternal descent takes the place of maternal descent in the middle period. The third is like the first two, except that the stage of kinship grouping with definite unilateral descent is altogether omitted.

#### IV. DIFFUSION AND PATTERN.

The phenomenon of diffusion, notwithstanding its long and honorable history, stands in ill repute among some, at least, of the students of ethnology. In recent years a number of German scientists, with Graebner at the head, have revealed themselves as enthusiastic champions of the principle of diffusion of culture. They have, in fact, idolized the principle, and worship at its shrine. They have not succeeded, however, perhaps through excess of zeal, in altogether ridding the phenomenon of diffusion of that strange halo of unreality, of something exceptional and negligible, which has surrounded it

ever since the evolutionist first saw in diffusion the arch-enemy of organic development, the principal "disturbing influence" which marred the orthodox developmental processes through "inner growth." It thus behooves the fair-minded ethnologist to give diffusion its due. Evidence is not lacking in North America of the spread of features of social organization and of entire systems from tribe to tribe. The processes have been most carefully observed in the Northwest coast area and along the line of contact between the coast culture and the Athapascan and Salish tribes of the Plateau. The evidence is conclusive. The Athapascan neighbors of the Tlingit have borrowed the dual organization of the latter. The Eskimo neighbors of the same tribe, without borrowing the social framework, have adopted the ceremonial performances and paraphernalia associated with that framework. Similarly the Babine, neighbors of the Tsimshian, have borrowed from them the four-clan division and the institution of maternal descent. The western Shuswap share with the coast people a division into castes and hereditary crest-groups, which, among the Shuswap, tend to be exogamous. The case of the Lillooet is most interesting, however; for here we find all the essential traits of the social fabric of the coast engrafted upon a tribe of a fundamentally different type. The resulting composite, however, looks, for special reasons, so genuine (in the classic evolutionary sense), that, but for the historical evidence, its complex derivation would not be suspected. At this point I may be pardoned for quoting a footnote from a former work:—

"It certainly is a curious play of circumstances that just among the Lillooet a full-fledged belief in descent from the totem should be found. We can only guess at the origin of this feature, but the process suggested before seems at least plausible: as the clan of the coast fused with the village community of the interior, the crest of the clan became identified with the human ancestor of the villagers; thus the clansmen came to believe in their descent from the eponymous animal.

"A stray traveller, ignorant of local conditions, would probably describe the Lillooet as a community organized along the lines of classical totemism: he would mention totemic clans with animal names, and descent from the totem; clan exogamy, possibly in a state of decay, for which relationship exogamy would easily be mistaken; while traces of totemic taboos could be found in the many prohibitions against the killing and eating of certain animals prevalent in that area. If not for such facts as the paternal and maternal inheritance of clan membership, which might set our traveller on the right track, he could hardly suspect that what he stamped as classical totemism was really due to the engrafting of an heretical totemism upon a non-totemic community." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, vol. xxiii (1910), p. 284, footnote 1.

Within the bounds of the Northwest culture there is evidence of the spread of a maternal totemic kinship organization, indigenous among the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian, southward to the Heilsa, Heiltsuk, and Kwakiutl, among whom it produces a peculiar mongrel organization of a maternal-paternal type, probably resulting through the superposition of certain features of a maternal system upon an originally paternal organization.<sup>1</sup> From the Kwakiutl the northern system spread still farther south, transforming into clans the villages of the coast Salish. The Bellacoola have become completely transfigured by the coast culture; but, in place of the usual clan exogamy, we find endogamy in their clans. Elsewhere in North America the spread of social systems from one cultural group to another has not been so carefully observed. Evidence is not lacking, however. From this point of view the social structures of the Western Plains tribes are of interest. Of these, the Blackfoot may serve as an example. They are organized into nicknamed bands, — local groups which appear as units in the camp circle. These bands comprise largely individuals related by blood; and the sense of the blood-bond must be pronounced, for it is given by the Blackfoot as the reason for the tendency towards band exogamy. Descent is paternal; but a woman, after marriage, joins the local group of her husband, and is thenceforth regarded as belonging to that band. Now, this organization of the Blackfoot seems to combine some characteristics of a typical Plateau tribe with traits found among the Siouan tribes of the Eastern Plains area. On the one hand, we find local groups with nicknames, the lack of functions connected with the local groups (other than those referring to the camp circle), and — a trait unthinkable in a gentile or clan system — the custom according to which a woman after marriage changes her band affiliations. So far, all is Plateau type. On the other hand, the sense of relationship in the band is strong; there is a marked tendency towards band exogamy and all but fixed paternal descent of band membership; the bands, moreover, appear as social units with definite functions in the camp circle. In these features we recognize the gentile organization of the Eastern Plains. Now, considering that the tribes of the Western Plains have as their western neighbors tribes of Plateau culture, and as their eastern neighbors the Siouan tribes of the Plains, with both of whom they have been in contact and communication for long periods, it is hardly too much to assert that the mixed type of social organization found on the Western Plains has developed under the combined historical influences of the Plateau and the Eastern Plains.

A survey of social systems in North America reveals another sug-

<sup>1</sup> For a more precise characterization of the situation, see my review of Frazer's *Totemism and Exogamy*, in *Current Anthropological Literature*, 1913, p. 212.

gestive fact. We find that systems of more or less strikingly similar characteristics are spread over large continuous areas. The tribes of the Arctic, Plateau, and California areas, covering a tremendous geographically continuous district, and comprising tribes of varied linguistic affiliations and physical types, are highly comparable in social organization, representing the family-village type, with indeterminate descent, and no clearly-defined social units. On the Northwest coast we find the Tlingit-Haida-Tsimshian group, with a highly complex maternal kinship organization and totemic features. The social systems of these groups present highly striking similarities in details. The Kwakiutl tribes constitute a clan or gentile area of a somewhat different type, with which the Nootka ought, perhaps, to be included. In the Southwest a vast district is inhabited by tribes organized on a maternal kinship basis, with numerous clans, and phratries comprising varying numbers of clans. On the Plains, the western tribes referred to before constitute one strictly comparable group. The Siouan tribes of the Eastern Plains display no less striking similarities in social structure, based on a dual organization, a paternal kinship system, with fairly numerous gentes, of pronounced local and ceremonial associations, and totemic features; in some respects, the Winnebago belong to this group of tribes. In the Woodland area the Iroquois share with a number of Algonquian tribes (such as the Delaware and Shawnee) a maternal kinship system, with a strictly limited number of clans. In the Southeast the data soon to be published indicate a wide area, characterized by numerous clans and a somewhat complex system of higher social units. This distribution of types of social organization can have only one meaning. It would be absurd to suppose that within these continuous areas of similar social systems the separate tribes developed their social structures independently of one another, and that the similarities described above were due to a miraculous series of coincidences. Here, if ever, do the facts of distribution speak for diffusion. What was the precise nature of these processes of diffusion can only be conjectured pending further investigations, but the fact of diffusion itself cannot be doubted. Interpretative work on diffusion has not so far resulted in much positive insight; at this place, only tentative suggestions towards such an interpretation can be attempted. Two radically different historical processes may account for the phenomenon of uniformity over wide areas, — (1) migrations of tribes originally occupying a limited area, and having there developed a social system; (2) spread of a social system, developed in a tribe or group of tribes, to other tribes occupying a wider area, with relative permanency. In the latter instance the original social system becomes a pattern which determines or influences the systems of more or less

distant tribes. Both processes are known to have occurred. The first may be exemplified by the dispersion of the tribes of the Iroquois Confederacy; the second, by historical processes, which, as suggested before, must be held accountable for the composite social systems of the Western Plains.

Before leaving the subject of diffusion, another point of psychological import must be noted. In the phenomena of diffusion from the Northwest coast to the tribes of Eskimo, Athapaskan, and Salish lineage, we deal with tribes of different cultural type and radically different social structures. The phenomena of diffusion between the Eskimo and Athapaskan, and *vice versa*, or between the Plateau and Western Plains tribes, refer to groups which, at least in their social systems, are of less distinct characteristics. The spread of social features from the northern to the southern tribes of the Northwest coast follows tribes belonging to a highly uniform culture area (excepting, of course, the Bellacoola). To these facts must be added a phenomenon exemplified among the Kwakiutl, where the entire social structure and life of the people have been patterned after the clan type.<sup>1</sup> The instances here cited constitute a fairly representative series of types of diffusion of a cultural feature, starting with an instance where the tribes in question are strikingly distinct in culture, followed next by one where the cultural differences are less marked, then by one where the diffusion takes place within one cultural area, and winding up with an instance where one cultural feature (the clan) becomes a pattern after which are fashioned diverse other features within one tribe. Now, an analysis of these instances does not suggest any radical differences in the psychological principles involved. It seems that what we discuss under the heading of "pattern theories" when remaining within the limits of culture areas and individual tribes, and what is designated as "diffusion" when intertribal processes or processes between culture areas are involved, belong to one and the same type of psycho-sociological phenomena, and that the differences observed are rather those of specific content of the features involved than of psychological principle.<sup>2</sup>

#### V. SOCIAL UNITS AND THEIR FUNCTIONS.

According to Morgan's conception, the clan or gens was not only a universal institution belonging to a certain stage of social development, but a social category that was perfectly univocal in its conno-

<sup>1</sup> Compare the unduly neglected article by Boas, "Der Einfluss der sozialen Gliederung der Kwakiutl auf deren Kultur," in the Proceedings of the XIV International Congress of Americanists (Stuttgart, 1904), pp. 141-148.

<sup>2</sup> Compare the formulation of this point in my "Principle of Limited Possibilities in the Development of Culture" (Journal of American Folk-Lore, vol. xxvi, 1913, pp. 286-287).

tations. It carried with it certain definitely fixed functions, which were permanent characteristics of clans or gentes. While this conception of Morgan's could not withstand the scepticism born of evidence accumulated since his time, the tendency to conceive of a clan or gens as of something always like unto itself still survives among anthropologists, and even more markedly so in non-anthropological circles. Morgan taught that a clan or gens was distinguished by the right of electing its sachem and chiefs; the right of deposing its sachem and chiefs; the obligation not to marry in the gens; mutual rights of inheritance of the property of deceased members; reciprocal obligations of help, defence, and redress of injuries; the right of bestowing names upon its members; the right of adopting strangers into the gens; common religious rites; a common burial-place; and a council of the gens. Now, these traits may be regarded as specific clan or gentile characteristics only if no other social unit is ever associated with them, and if the clan or gens is always so associated. That such is not the case, is no longer a matter of dispute. Starting with Morgan's conception as representing an attitude still surviving and carried by him to its utmost logical conclusion, we may now proceed to analyze, at the hand of North American material, the different types of social units which occur in that area, as well as their functions, with a view of ascertaining somewhat fully the relation of structure and function in social organization. We shall start with the individual, then proceed from the individual family, the maternal and paternal family, to the clan, the gens, the phratry and dual division, the tribe and the confederacy.

**THE INDIVIDUAL.** — It may seem paradoxical to speak of an individual as a social unit. When one considers, however, that an individual exercises functions in society, and that these functions are in part like the functions of a family, a clan, a tribe; and when one also remembers that the function is what constitutes the real content and bearing of a social unit, — he comes to realize that the individual, while on the one hand standing in contrast to the social unit of which he is a part, must, on the other hand, be classed as a social unit, an agency having certain functions in society, together with the family, the clan, the tribe.

A superficial view of Indian life, of "savage" life in general, is apt to leave one with the impression that the individual as such, in a primitive community, is utterly bereft of all initiative, is bound hand and foot by custom, is a mere reflection of his social setting. While this is in part true, it is not the whole truth; and a more careful insight discloses a wide and important sphere of individual rights, activities, and initiative. The individual owns property, although the man's share may often be restricted to his clothing and weapons; the woman's,

to the house-utensils, industrial appliances, but also to the house itself. In the Indians' view of property, however, the concept readily transgresses the bounds of material possessions. Free from the conceptual constraints which in modern times manifest themselves in copyright litigations, the Indian boldly passes from the material to the spiritual, and extends the concept of property to dances, songs, ritualistic details, myths, incantations, individual medicinal and supernatural powers. The ceremonial organizations of the Omaha or the Zuñi, or the Northwest coast tribes, furnish abundant examples of such spiritual property-rights. Among the Nootka, where the phenomenon of individual privilege flourishes undisturbed by the constraining frame of definite social groupings, we see perhaps the most extreme example of the wealth of individual prerogatives, together with the tendency to pass them on through inheritance; but, even outside of ceremonial complexes, such spiritual possessions as are acquired, for instance, through supernatural experiences with guardian-spirits, are strictly individual in character. The right of individual initiative was clearly recognized, and included activities of public concern, such as war and hunting. Even among such tribes as the Iroquois or the tribes of the Plains, where the business of war and that of hunting was highly socialized and associated with elaborate ceremonial, the right was not denied to the individual to start a war-party or to hunt on his own account. The specific rights of chiefs, on the other hand, it seems, were strictly limited throughout the North American area. The rights of initiative accorded the medicine-man were distinctly wider, especially where, as in the case of the Tlingit or Haida shaman, he appeared as an individual, unhampered by the rules and restraints of a religious or ceremonial brotherhood. Individual initiative in artistic activity and in invention in general has often been hinted at in recent discussion, but here our knowledge is too limited to warrant positive assertion.<sup>1</sup>

THE INDIVIDUAL FAMILY. — Among tribes where the individual family exists side by side with kinship groups and their almost invariable concomitant, exogamy, the unity of the family is much impaired, and its importance subordinated. While it displays more solidarity in tribes of the family-village type, it is true, as a general proposition applicable to tribes of both types, that the individual family does not often appear as a specific social, ceremonial, economic, or political unit. Further data from the Nootka may to some extent impair the validity of this statement. In the field of ceremonial activity it may be noted that among the Iroquois, Delaware, Tutelo,

<sup>1</sup> The functions of the individual, the range of individual initiative in primitive society, have been little understood. We may therefore look forward with interest to the publication of W. D. Wallis's researches bearing on that problem.

and other tribes, the individual family had a death-feast apart from the more imposing one associated with the clan. In one field of social activity, however, the individual family is pre-eminent; and that is education. This all-important process is, among Indians in general, vastly more constructive and less punitive than among their white brethren. The essentials of etiquette, of ceremonial behavior, of domestic activities, of industrial arts, of hunting and the use of weapons, are taught to the boy and the girl by their parents; in matters of folk-lore and tradition, parental authority is usually supplemented and transcended by that of the grandfather, grandmother, or of both. The matter of marriage is also largely attended to by the individual family, with emphasis on the female side; for, while the consent of the fathers is sought, the matrimonial candidates are selected and duly weighted by the mothers of the two families, and the wisdom of their choice is but seldom questioned. Lowie reports that among the Shoshone the individual family exercises juridical functions in the case of crimes, such as murder. This must be regarded as highly exceptional.

THE MATERNAL AND THE PATERNAL FAMILY. — A maternal family embraces all the male and female descendants of a woman, the descendants of her female descendants, and so on. The paternal family embraces all the male and female descendants of a man, the descendants of his male descendants, and so on. As will presently appear, however, the continuity of a family, in this wider sense, does not extend from generation to generation in perpetuity, as is the case with the gens and the clan, but is restricted to a limited number of generations, after which some of the offshoots of the family are no longer recognized as forming part of it. The maternal family has been carefully studied and described only among the Confederated Iroquois, where the functions of that social unit are numerous and its bearings all-important, and where it is designated by a separate native term distinct from that used for the clan. There can be little doubt, however, that maternal and paternal families have played a rôle elsewhere among Indian tribes; and specific information on this point from field-workers is invited. A remark of Miss Fletcher's about the descent, among the Omaha, of certain ceremonial functions in groups of paternal blood-relations, suggests the presence of such a unit at least in that tribe. We may not, however, expect to find the maternal or paternal family as prominent in any other tribe in North America as it is among the Iroquois; for, were that so, the fact would certainly have been observed and recorded by this time. Among the Iroquois the maternal family exercised, in ancient times, ceremonial and religious functions which have since become obsolete. The main concern, however, of the maternal family, was the election and depo-



sition of chiefs and ceremonial officials; and in this respect the maternal family still stands supreme wherever the social system of the Iroquois has been preserved. The relation of the maternal family to the clan constitutes a somewhat puzzling subject; and I may perhaps be permitted to cite, in this connection, a passage from another publication.

"The clan and the maternal family, notwithstanding the existence of separate terms for the two kinds of social units, are constantly being confounded by even the most competent informants. Several reasons may be assigned for this fact. Notwithstanding their objective and functional differences, the clan and the family are clearly based on the same principle, — both social units comprise a group of people united by maternal descent. In the maternal family the relationship correlated with the descent is that of blood, and its degree is definitely known for all individuals of the family. In the clan the degree of relationship between clan-mates cannot be defined [except in so far as the clan embraces blood-relatives], but the sense of such relationship is ever there, and, as in the family, it is associated with the maternal line. Speaking analytically, the clan is nothing but an overgrown family, embracing individuals of indefinite relationship. In recent times many clans have become depleted in number, owing to migration or other causes. Thus it happens, in individual instances, that a clan coincides with a maternal family, in which case the two units can no longer be distinguished. The election of chiefs and ceremonial officials, moreover, while intimately associated with the clan, is the particular function of a maternal family within the clan, thus constituting another bond between the two social bodies.

"There can be no doubt, however, that the clan and the maternal family are really distinct. It has been shown that the chieftainships regularly descend in maternal families; but outside of these families there are, individual instances excepted, other families, other lines of descent, in the clans to which the chieftainships belong. If the chief's family becomes extinct, or has no males available for chieftainship, the title may be transferred, temporarily or permanently, to another family of the same clan, or even to some family of another clan. . . . The mechanism by which a family is perpetuated from generation to generation differs radically from that operating in the clan. The family has no outward symbol of its unity, and its continuance is due to the memory of the concrete relationships involved. The clan, on the other hand, owing mainly to the presence of a clan name, is handed down from mother to children automatically, so to say, and the clan name suffices to keep all its members identified from generation to generation. As a corollary of this difference appear the fluctuating character of the family and the permanence of the clan.

Whereas the clan sustains no loss of members except through actual depletion or some artificial process, such as adoption of its members by another clan, the family of individuals where relationship is definitely known always carries a fringe of individuals who are known to be related to the family by blood, but the precise degree of whose relationship to the family has been forgotten. And beyond these there are still other individuals who, in an objective test, would prove to be related to the family by blood, but the fact of whose relationship itself is no longer recognized. Thus the family constantly tends to break up, some lines of descent multiplying, others becoming extinct, and so on."<sup>1</sup>

The confusion between a maternal family and a clan is of old standing. Morgan, who must have known the maternal family of the Iroquois better than any other writer, living or dead, nevertheless makes the statement that "a knowledge of the relationship to each other of the members of the same gens [clan] is never lost."<sup>2</sup> This proposition applies to a maternal family, but not to a clan. It is much to be desired that our information on the social systems of the Indians of North America should be amplified with this special point in view.

THE CLAN AND THE GENS. — Clans and gentes, in the North American area, are associated with many diverse functions. Among the Iroquois the clan-mates held their land in common, and had clan burial-grounds. Among the tribes of the Northwest coast, clans owned sections on the coast, as well as strips of land along the course of creeks, for their fishing; and entire valleys for their hunting. Conditions among the Zuni were not dissimilar to these; but we do not find clan or gentile ownership of land among the Winnebago, or the Omaha, or the Crow. Among the Iroquois and Omaha, the clan or gens has distinct social and political functions in connection with chieftainships, clan or gentile councils, etc. The political functions of clans on the Northwest coast are not negligible, but here they are overshadowed by similar functions of the household and town. On the other hand, the clan among the Iroquois is distinctly not a ceremonial unit; whereas among the Tlingit or Haida, or Tsimshian, or Kwakiutl, or Omaha and the group of tribes similarly organized, or the Zuni, the clans or gentes carry multitudinous ceremonial functions, are associated with songs, dances, masks, myths, medicinal powers, medicine-bundles, and what not. On the other hand, among the Delaware and other Algonquian tribes, the Crow and the Hidatsa,

<sup>1</sup> Summary Report of the Geological Survey, Ottawa, Canada, 1913; Reports from Anthropological Division, p. 370.

<sup>2</sup> "Houses and House-Life of the American Aborigines" (Contributions to North American Ethnology, vol. iv, p. 33, note).

the clans are, as among the Iroquois, non-ceremonial units. Clan or gentile sets of individual names are a very common feature indeed. It is spread all over the Northwest coast; we find it among the Omaha and related tribes; among the Winnebago, the Iroquois, and in the Southwest and Southeast; although the distribution of the feature in the two last-named areas is not sufficiently ascertained. The precise nature, however, of the relation between the individual name, its content, and the clan or gens, varies greatly in the different tribes. Among the Tlingit, for instance, the majority of the names are animal, but they do not refer to the clan crest; among the Haida the names have fallen prey to the influence of the potlatch complex, and one finds the majority of them reflecting ideas suggested by the potlatch. The Omaha individual names in part refer to the gentile totem, in part they are of an indeterminate character, standing in no relation whatsoever to the totemic ideas of the group. Among the Wyandot, according to data as yet unpublished, the majority of the names stand in direct relation to the clan totem; while among the Confederated Iroquois the names have a clearly defined type, but in no way reflect the identity of the clan to which they belong; so that the clan sets are kept apart merely by the knowledge, on the part of the particular clansmen, that "such and such names were used in our clan before, and therefore we shall use them, while such and such other names were and are being used in another clan, and therefore we may not use them."

In exogamy, at first sight, one seems to find a trait invariably associated with clans or gentes in North America; but here, again, closer inspection discloses at least two ways in which clans or gentes are associated with exogamy. Among the Crow, Fox, and many tribes in the Southwest and Southeast, the clans as such are the carriers of exogamous functions, are exogamous units; such is also the case among the Iroquois, but here we have evidence to the effect that the phratry was anciently the exogamous unit. At that time, then, the exogamy of the clans was a derivative feature.<sup>1</sup> In the same sense the clans of the Tlingit and Haida, the Winnebago, and the so-called "sub-gentes" of the Omaha, are derivatively exogamous. The situation among the Omaha is not clear, but it seems that the social condition found among them by the ethnologist was one of transition from gentile exogamy to exogamy of the sub-gens. The more intimate psychic correlate of exogamy cannot, at this late time, be readily ascertained; but in a general way the statement seems justified that

<sup>1</sup> Compare my discussion of exogamy in the *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, vol. xxiii (1910), pp. 231-251; R. H. Lowie's "A New Conception of Totemism" (*American Anthropologist*, 1911, pp. 193-198); my "Totemism and Exogamy defined: a Rejoinder" (*Ibid.*, pp. 589-592); and Lowie's "Social Organization" (*The American Journal of Sociology*, 1914, pp. 68-97).

the strong emotional backing of exogamy, which constitutes it a religious imperative, is not characteristic of North America, a milder emotional reaction in the form of social opprobrium or ridicule taking its place.

Before leaving this analysis of the clan and gens, I want to note another feature relating to the kinship group as a part of the tribe. A survey of American data (as of analogous data in other areas) reveals the fact that, in point of number of clans, clan-systems represent two types, which may be designated as systems with a limited and those with an unlimited number of clans. Of the first type, the Iroquois, the Omaha, Winnebago, Crow, are representative. Among the Iroquois, the Mohawk and Oneida have only three clans each; while the Seneca, Cayuga, and Onondaga have more than eight clans apiece. This does not include some obviously recent formations. The number of clans common to the last three tribes is eight, and that may be regarded as the probable number of clans before the separation of the tribes. The Omaha have ten clans, evenly divided between the two phratries. The Winnebago, have twelve, — four in one, eight in the other phratry; the number of individuals in each phratry, however, being about equal. The Crow have thirteen, grouped in five phratries of two clans each, and one of three clans. In all these tribes the number of clans is small; and the number of individuals in each clan, large, being counted by the hundreds. Among the Tlingit or Haida, on the other hand, we find some fifty odd clans; the number among the Kwakiutl is still larger; the Hopi and Zuñi of the Southwest, the Creek and Natchez of the Southeast, also have numerous clans. In these instances the number of individuals in a clan must be small, — as a rule, considerably under one hundred. The clans and gentes, then, in the two types of tribes, are very different units numerically; and their relations to the tribe, and to other clans within the tribe, must be different. It would be strange indeed if such objective contrasts were not to have any psychic correlates. From the genetic point of view, moreover, — that is, in the problem of clan origins, — the above contrast would not seem to be without significance. Nothing more definite can be said on the question at this stage, the great need being further knowledge.

THE PHRATRY AND THE DUAL DIVISION. — The phratries or dual divisions of the Iroquois appear on all ceremonial occasions. At the great yearly festivals, such as the Green-Corn or Mid-Winter, at the ceremonial meetings of the medicine societies or religious societies, the two sides are always represented; and in the Long House they are spacially separated, the speakers of each side addressing the other in the course of the ceremonial. Among the Tlingit, also, the phratries or dual divisions are ceremonial units, and the great pot-

latches, for instance, are always given by one phratry to the other. Similarly among the Winnebago, the phratries or dual divisions appear as ceremonial units in the war-bundle feasts; and throughout those of the Plains tribes who have the camp circle and perform the Sun Dance, the phratries or dual divisions appear as ceremonial units. Among the Iroquois the phratries also exercise political functions, one phratry having, for instance, the *veto* right over the choice of the other in the election of chiefs. In no other tribe in North America, so far as known, did phratries exercise political functions like those of the Iroquois. The separation of phratries at games, feasts, contests, on the other hand, is a rather common feature, shared by the Iroquois, Tlingit, Omaha, and Yuchi; among the last named, however, the dual divisions are not phratries, for they are not subdivided into clans, but appear quite independent of the clan units, intersecting the latter. Among the Tlingit and the Iroquois the phratries exercise reciprocal functions in burial and minor services. Phratries that are not dual divisions, such as occur among the Crow or in the Southwest, do not seem to have any particular functions, except an occasional tendency towards exogamy in the Southwest. Dual divisions, on the other hand, are commonly exogamous. Those of the Iroquois must, on good evidence, be regarded as having been exogamous in the past. Exogamy is the rule with the dual divisions of the Tlingit, Haida, and Winnebago, and in the past probably of the Omaha and related tribes; but the dual divisions of the Yuchi, which are not phratries, do not practise exogamy, nor is exogamy associated with the phratries or dual divisions of the Hidatsa. Finally, the point made in connection with the clan holds equally for the phratry: an Iroquois phratry with its four odd clans, or an Omaha one with its five, cannot be conceived as strictly comparable to a Tlingit phratry subdivided into some twenty-five clans; or to a Crow phratry, which is nothing but a loose association of clans, without, it would seem, much functional significance.

THE TRIBE AND THE CONFEDERACY. — The functions of a tribe in North America are not sufficiently known. Especially are we in doubt as to its political status, and a discussion of that subject may perhaps be deferred. Without doubt, however, the tribe appears as a religious and ceremonial unit on such occasions as the Sun Dance of the Plains, or the Midewiwin of the Winnebago and related tribes, or the Busk of the Creek, or the great yearly festivals of the Iroquois at the time when the tribes still preserved their geographical independence, or even at the present time on those reserves where the assimilation of the separate tribes, leading to the loss of tribal solidarity, has not proceeded very far.

Still less definite information is obtainable on the Confederacies,

such as the seven council-fires of the Dakota, or the Powhatan Confederacy. The confederacy, on the other hand, known as the "League of the Iroquois," has been carefully studied and described. It appears as a strongly knit political body, which functions as a unit in the relations, both in war and in peace, of the Iroquois with other tribes. It also appears as a ceremonial body on such occasions as the investiture of a chief. Its social significance was great, for from it emanated the authority vested in the fifty chiefs or lords of the League.

THE LOCAL GROUP. — The significance of territorial units in primitive life has certainly been underestimated. We read a good deal about the life of the family and the clan, and the blood-bond that constitutes the real foundation of primitive society. Relatively little, on the other hand, is heard about the bearing and functions of the local group; and the common inference is that its importance is negligible. Much credit is due to Dr. John R. Swanton for his attempts to stir up interest in the study of the local basis of Indian life.

Even a superficial survey discloses the fact that in tribes of the family-village type the local group shares with the family, itself a unit with marked local associations, the social, political, and ceremonial functions occurring in that area; but its significance is by no means restricted to tribes of that type. Among the Iroquois and Omaha, Winnebago, Haida and Tlingit,—tribes dominated by complex and functionally all-important clan or gentile systems,—the local group remains a prominent factor in the life of the people. Among the Iroquois it never lost its significance as an economic unit,—a body for mutual assistance, in the work of the fields, in building houses, in the innumerable odds and ends of the various households. On the Northwest coast the solidarity of the local group is great, in their winter villages, as well as in their temporary habitations on the coast or in the valleys, or along the course of rivers, for summer fishing or for hunting of sea-mammals. Among the Western Plains tribes, the local groups on which the camp circle is based are scarcely less important than in the family-village area; and the more intense sense of kinship between the members of the group, based on the presence in it of many blood-relatives, only serves to increase its solidarity. If we look a little further back, the local group appears as a unit of even greater significance, for converging evidence from many parts of the North American area points to territorial unity as the basis for future clan and gentile systems. The mythology of the Iroquois, including the Deganawida epic, abounds in references to villages and village chiefs; no mention being made, except in the Deganawida epic, of clans or lords. With all the discounting due to such evidence as a source for historic reconstruction, the impression is irresistible that the local units were, if not the only, yet the all-important units in

ancient Iroquois society of pre-League days. The strong local associations of clans with villages and long-houses also point in that direction; although we should hesitate to assert, in the absence of sufficient evidence, that the Iroquois clans have developed out of local groups. That the camp circle, wherever it occurs, goes back to a ceremonial association of locally disparate groups, there can be little doubt; and the identification of such camp-circle divisions with gentes, in tribes of the Omaha type, speaks strongly for the double origin of the Omaha gentes from local groups with ceremonial functions. The local associations of the Tlingit and Haida clans, of local name, are most pronounced. Not only do their clan myths point to definite localities as the homes of clans, — the presence of shell-heaps corroborating mythological evidence, — but among the Tlingit, for instance, the vast majority of the clans are really local units present in only one locality. In the Southwest the situation is not clear: but here, also, recent observations supported by traditional accounts point to the local group as the ancient social unit and the precursor of the clan. Evidence bearing on the significance of territorial cohabitation in clan origins is furnished by the Kwakiutl, many Siouan and Algonquian tribes, and by the Iroquois, where new clans are known to have originated through migrations of offshoots of over-populous clans, or through the fusion of depleted clans or sections of clans inhabiting the same locality. If we add to this the theoretical grounds referred to before<sup>1</sup> and discussed elsewhere,<sup>2</sup> for regarding the territorial unit as the most primitive form of social grouping, it is hardly too much to say that we must see in the local group by far the most ancient, most universal, and on the whole a most important, unit in primitive society.

SOCIAL UNITS DEFINED. — A comparative glance at the social units discussed above, as related to their functions, reveals a constant overlapping of functions. The individual, it is true, stands out with sufficient clearness, the plausibility of which fact requires no comment. The tribe and the confederacy also stand in a class by themselves, for both of these groupings appear as units in intertribal dealings, — a trait which sharply differentiates them from intra-tribal social divisions. It must be noted, though, that ceremonial functions may become associated with all the social units here passed in review, beginning with the individual, and ending with the confederacy. It is in the case of social units in the narrower sense, however, of subdivisions within the tribe, that the overlapping of functions becomes most conspicuous. As such may be classed the dual division

<sup>1</sup> See p. 418.

<sup>2</sup> Compare my "Origin of Totemism" (*American Anthropologist*, N. S., vol. xiv, 1912, p. 605); and "Clan Origins among the Iroquois" (*Ibid.*, 1915, abstract of a lecture delivered on Oct. 26, 1914, before the Ethnological Society of New York).

and phratry, the clan and the gens, the maternal and paternal family, and, with certain reservations, the individual family and the local group. With reference to these units, it will be observed that in different tribes or culture areas, units classed as identical terminologically, display partly or wholly different functions; and that, on the other hand, social, political, and ceremonial functions may become associated with each and all of these units. But a social unit is what it does. The function is the real test of the content and bearing of a social unit. Hence social units designated by the same term, but having different functions, are really distinct; while social units distinguished terminologically, but with the same functions, are similar or identical. The only scientifically satisfactory way of defining social units would be to define them on the basis of their functions. This, however, cannot be done; for, as shown above, while some functions prefer certain social units, almost any of a set of important functions may become associated with almost any social unit. The impossibility of defining social units by their functions becomes even more apparent when one considers that ceremonial, religious, political, or social functions are shared by social units of the type here discussed with social aggregates of an entirely different character; such as the religious societies of the Southwest or Northwest, the military or age societies of the Plains, the medicine societies of the Iroquois. The subject has another aspect, however, which seems to resolve an apparently hopeless situation. Whereas the bond between the members of a society consists solely in their common functions, some of the social units analyzed in these pages are such also on account of their social composition. A group based on relationship, and one based on local cohabitation, may be designated as natural groups. If the concept of relationship be extended from a group of blood-relatives to a group tied in part only by the bond of blood, but displaying solidarity through assumed, fictitious kinship; and if to this be added another natural group, that constituted by a married couple with their immediate ancestors and progeny, — we obtain the fundamental units in our series: the individual family, the maternal and paternal family, the clan and the gens. The phratry and dual division may, with some reservations, also be included in the series, in so far as the phratry is a subdivided clan or gens, or an association of clans or gentes, and in so far as the dual division is the same. If such is the case, the terms used for these social units should not be discarded. We may not define them by their functions, for reasons stated before; but we must give them definitions wide enough to include many specific varieties, yet narrow enough to convey an appreciable meaning. Keeping this in mind, the following definitions may be suggested, which, moreover, agree fairly well with widely accepted usage.



A *band* is a local group without very clearly defined functions.

A *sept* is a local group which is a subdivision of a larger local group, or a local subdivision of a social unit, in the restricted sense.

A *village* is a local group of fairly definite internal organization and external functions.

A *family* or *individual family* requires no further definition.

A *maternal family* is constituted by a woman, all her female and male descendants, the descendants of her female descendants, and so on. A maternal family, however, never extends, in its entirety, beyond five or at most six generations. A *paternal family* is constituted by a man, all his male and female descendants, the descendants of his male descendants, and so on. The remark made about the maternal family applies here also.

A *clan* is a subdivision of a tribe constituted by a group of actual and assumed kindred, which has a name and is hereditary in the maternal line. A *gens* is the same, except that it is hereditary in the paternal line.

A *phratry* is a social subdivision of a tribe which is itself subdivided. It may be hereditary in the maternal or the paternal line.

A *dual division* or *moiety* requires no further definition.

To supplement these terms, descriptive terms will have to be used as occasion requires, for difficulties will arise with this as with any other set of definitions. If this is done, there will be more definiteness and less confusion in our discussions of social organization, and a dim hope may then arise of an ultimate international agreement on the subject.

#### VI. SOCIAL ORGANIZATION IN ITS RELATIONS TO THE OTHER ASPECTS OF CULTURE.

Space does not permit us to disentangle with adequate care the multifarious threads — some gross and obvious, others elusive and delicate — which bind the social system of a group to the other aspects of its culture. A few remarks, however, will be in place. The relations of social organization to the rest of culture are either general or specific. Under general relations would be included such facts as the reflection of the dual organization of the Iroquois or Omaha in their mythologies; or the patterning of the animal Olympus of the Haida or Tsimshian after the principles of their social systems; or the inheritance of certain ceremonial offices in a clan or gens or maternal family; or the reflection of the family or clan basis of organization in the form and size of houses; or the effect of communal work, following the lines of social units, on economic and industrial activities. The specific relations consist in that aspect of social units which constitutes them the carriers of features belonging to other aspects

of culture; for the functions of the social units discussed in the preceding section are but so many bonds between social organization and art, and mythology, and ceremonialism, and politics, and between each one of these and the others. The intimacy of these bonds is not easily realized by representatives of a foreign culture. The association of natural groups, based on local cohabitation or blood-ties, with multifarious functions involving many important aspects of the material and spiritual possessions of the group, are, on the whole, foreign to our culture; and the social units which exercise various functions—such as political parties, local churches, clubs, colleges, social classes, or industrial groups—either embrace so many individuals each, or are themselves so numerous, as to impair the stability and intensity of the associations formed during the exercise of their functions. The individuals, moreover, who constitute the psychic factors of these associations and the actual carriers of their functions, participate simultaneously in so many diverse cycles of associations, that but few permanent psychic connections can emerge from the maze of conflicting ideas, motives, interests, and emotional values. The situation is radically different in an Indian, in a primitive community. The clan or gens which is the carrier of functions consists at most of a few hundred individuals, usually much less than that; the exercise of these functions is never totally interrupted; and at frequent intervals, at feasts, ceremonies, on political and social occasions, opportunity is given for the recharging of emotional values, and through them of conceptual associations. The associations thus formed and refreshed, in an atmosphere of high psychic incandescence, attain an intensity and stability quite foreign to such associations in our own culture.

From these considerations two general conclusions force themselves upon the mind. Social units, in primitive society, become, through their functions, the carriers of the cultural values of the group; and to the extent to which that is true, the culture of the group cannot be properly understood without a thorough grasp of the principles underlying the social system, nor can the social units be seen in proper perspective without an intimate knowledge of the culture of the group. Again, it is widely recognized that one of the fundamental contrasts between modern and primitive society consists in the fact that conceptual and emotional associations abound in the latter which in kind and intensity are, on the whole, foreign to the former. Now, we have seen how the exercise by social units, of functions replete with cultural values, favors the formation of such associations; we have also seen how the frequently-recurring dynamic situations heighten the intensity and insure the permanence of such associations. May we not suggest, then, that part, at least, of the secret of that fundamental contrast between modern and primitive society, lies

in the fact that in primitive society, social units assume functions which bring them into intimate contact with other aspects of the culture of the group, and which bring the latter into intimate contact with one another?

#### VII. SUMMARY.

The salient points of the preceding analysis may be summarized as follows: —

1. In addition to a clan and a gentile area, there is in North America a vast area of the family-village type;

2. The tribes of Indians organized on the clan and gentile basis are, on the whole, associated with higher cultures than those organized on the family-village basis;

3. No proof is forthcoming of a pre-existing maternal kinship system in tribes having a paternal kinship system;

4. The local group, while pre-eminent in the family-village system, is by no means negligible when associated with a clan or gentile system; and, in a wider sense,

5. The local group must be regarded as the most ancient and fundamental basis of social organization;

6. Evidence abounds of the diffusion, in whole or in part, of social systems from tribe to tribe or from culture area to culture area;

7. There is also evidence of the reproduction of definite social pattern, within the bounds of a single culture area or individual tribe;

8. Questions of diffusion and pattern constitute two aspects of one socio-psychological problem;

9. Some functions tend to appear in association with certain particular social units, but a number of functions may become associated with any of a set of social units: hence,

10. Social units may not be defined in accordance with their functions; but

11. Certain social units are natural territorial or kinship groups, and as such they preserve their individuality whatever their functions, and may be defined (see p. 434);

12. Through the functional association of social units with other aspects of culture, the social system and the rest of the culture of a group are constituted an organic whole, and neither can be understood in dissociation from the other; on the other hand,

13. The specific socialization of cultural values in social units conditions and furthers the formation of conceptual and emotional associations between the different aspects of the culture of a group;

14. The intensity and stability of such associations constitute a striking contrast between modern society and primitive society, hence the above considerations suggest at least a partial interpretation of that contrast.